



News Release

Shelby County Health Department

814 Jefferson Ave., Memphis, TN 38105

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Use Extreme Caution With Cleaning Chemicals

MEMPHIS, TN – As the flood waters continue to recede, more and more citizens will be going back into their homes attempting to salvage their property by disinfecting floors, countertops, carpets, walls and other surfaces. The Shelby County Health Department is urging citizens to use extreme caution when working with cleaning products. Most commercial cleaning products, if used by the manufacturer's directions for use, should not produce any significant health effects. However, a number of these products have the potential to produce a variety of adverse health effects if used improperly or if mixed with other cleaning agents.

While casual exposure to cleaning products can be dangerous, exposure to a combination of them can be deadly.

DO NOT MIX:

- Bleach with ammonia
 - Toxic, potentially lethal vapors are produced. Immediate inhalation hazards
- Bleach with Acid Toilet Bowl Cleaners
 - This mixture can result in toxic, potentially deadly fumes.
- Bleach with Vinegar
 - Vinegar is a type of acid. Toxic Chlorine vapor is produced.
- Different Brands of One Type of Product
 - They may react violently, produce toxins or become ineffective
- Highly Alkaline Products with Highly Acidic Products
 - Acids and bases (alkalis) can react violently, presenting a splash hazard. Acids and bases are caustic and may cause chemical burns.
- Certain Disinfectants with Detergents
 - Do not mix disinfectants with "quaternary ammonia" listed as an ingredient with a detergent. The effectiveness of the disinfectant may be neutralized.

All chemicals should be stored in their original containers with their labels in cabinets away from children and pets. They should be stored away from heat or direct sunlight. Product labels contain important information including safety precautions, directions for use, instructions for spill cleanup and a list of suitable and unsuitable surface applications. Not reading the label, or intentionally not following label instructions could potentially lead to accidents or injuries.

Immediately dial 911 if you have a poison emergency and the victim has collapsed or is not breathing. If the victim is awake and alert, call the Poison Control Hotline Number, 1-800-222-1222. As a precaution, keep the hotline number on or near every home telephone and save it on your cell phone. The line open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Have this information ready:

- The victim's age and weight
- The container or bottle of the poison if available
- The time of the poison exposure
- The address where the poisoning occurred

For additional information or a list of the Environmental Protection Agency's "Safer Products", which are a list of products that are both safe for humans and environment, please visit:

<http://www.epa.gov/dfe/pubs/projects/formulat/saferproductlabeling.htm>

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